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A PLAIN and EASY
ACCOUNT
OF THE
FALL of MAN.

IN WHICH,
The distinct Agency of an EVIL
SPIRIT is asserted; and the
Objection, taken from the Silence
of *Moses* upon that Point, fully
answered.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

By *JAMES HAMPTON*, A. M.

L O N D O N:

Printed for R. DODSLEY in *Pall-mall*, and
Sold by M. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater-*
nerster Row.

MDCCL.

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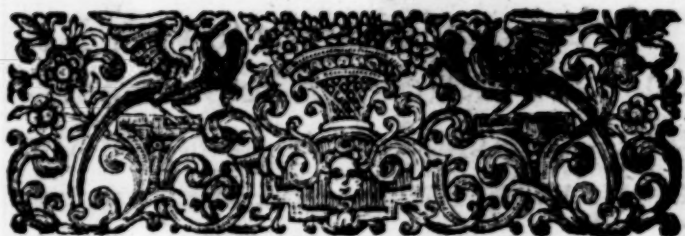
IN A LETTER to a FRIEND

BY JAMES HAMPTON, A.M.

LONDON:

Printed for H. Dorey, in Pall-mall, and
Sold by M. Cooper, at the Golden Rule
in St. Paul's Church-yard.

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A

Plain and Easy Account

OF THE

FALL OF MAN.

S I R,

YOU desire to know my Thoughts concerning the *Mosaic* History of the Fall: A Subject, you say, which has employed the Attention and Labours of the Learned and Religious in all Ages, and yet is still exposed to the malicious Attacks of conceited, and sensual, Unbelievers.

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I shall readily agree to your Request : For I cannot help considering this great Event, as one of the most interesting, and important, in all the Sacred Writings. It is one of the first Links of that great Chain which connects us with the Deity : And the chief Foundation, upon which our future Hopes, as well as the Knowledge of our present State, depend.

But before I proceed, I must first take Notice, that those various Expositions you hint at have, in my Opinion, greatly increased the Difficulties with which this Transaction seems to labour ; and have even afforded new Matter of Doubt, or Ridicule. And this will always be the Consequence, when Men attend more to their Prejudices and Passions, than to the plain and obvious Meaning of the Scriptures ;
and

and lose Sight, as they often do, of the sacred Text, in Pursuit of their own partial Reasoning.

The Writings of *Moses*, as of all the inspired Authors, are everywhere the best Interpreters of themselves. My Business therefore, in the following Sheets, shall be to consider the Story of the Fall, in the plain and simple Dress in which it is there presented ; to keep close to the Letter of the Relation, and to shew it's Consistency and Probability, without the Aid of any foreign Exposition, or forced Conjecture.

I would only first observe, that both the Reality and Verisimilitude of the History of the Fall of Man is grounded upon the Apostasy and Punishment of the rebellious Angels. It is true indeed,

Moses has made no mention of this Transaction. But if we examine the Purposes for which his Writings were designed, we shall have no Cause to wonder at his Silence upon this Subject.

Before the Time of *Moses*, God had not communicated any written Law to Mankind. He had indeed from time to time revealed his Power, and his Will, to some particular Men ; but this alone was not sufficient to procure a due Obedience to his Will, or a proper Acknowledgment of his Power. As Men became farther removed from the Origin of their Being, the Traces of their Dependence on one sovereign Creator grew more faint ; their Reason was bewildered, and sought for Refuge in the most affrightful Idolatry. Even the Descendents of the pious
Abraham

Abraham were infected with the general Blindness. It was then that God sent *Moses*; to redeem the World, and particularly his elected People, from so much Extravagance and Impiety; and to recall them to the Worship of the one supreme Being, the Author, and Protector, and Punisher of Man. To effect this great Purpose, it was necessary to find out something more fixed and durable than Tradition; which, as Experience had fatally evinced, was insufficient to preserve the Memory of divine Truths. *Moses* therefore collected into Writing the Histories of the first Men; of *Adam*, *Noah*, *Abraham* and his Children; whose Lives were but one continued Recital of the wonderful Acts of the Deity, and of his Communication with the World. For the Truth of his
 Relation,

Relation, he appealed to the Places where these great Scenes were transacted, and where the Memorials of them might still be viewed : Such were the Wells digged, and Altars raised, by the Patriarchs ; the Seats of their Habitation ; the Repositories of their Bones ; and the Mountains and Hills, which had been sanctified by the Descent of Angels. To these Traditions he subjoined what God had more recently effected for the Deliverance and Safety of his People : the Sea divided by a Word, for their Escape ; and remanded to its Place, to overwhelm their Enemies : The Flame of Fire, that went before them in their Journey ; the Rock cleft asunder, and Water issuing from it ; together with numberless other Miracles, to which their Eye-sight had born unquestionable Testimony.

Thus

Thus the Power of God was established beyond all Doubt : and the Belief of this Power was the Foundation upon which the Law was built. But as the Minds of Men had been long inflav'd to the Impressions of the Senses, and were also continually expos'd to the Suggestions of Obstinacy and Pride, in order to remedy those Defects it was necessary not only to give a fuller and more adequate Conception of the Deity, and to describe him, as he is, a pure and independent Spirit, full of Wisdom, Intelligence, and Goodness, creating the Universe by his Word, and changing it at his Will ; but also to represent Mankind in their original, dependent, State ; produced, with the World, out of nothing ; made capable indeed of Happiness, and placed in the Enjoyment

joyment of it ; but soon, through wilful Disobedience, losing it ; and, from that fatal Moment, incumbered with various Weaknesses, Wants, and Imperfections ; and continually indebted to the first forming Hand for their Existence and Support.

Such in general was the Design, and such is the Substance, of the *Mosaic* Writings. The Creation of the Solar System, the Formation of Man, his Condition upon Earth, the Propagation of his Species, the Origin of Nations, are there delivered with all the Marks of the most precise and scrupulous Exactness. But the Subject led no farther. The other Works of the Creator, as infinite perhaps as his Perfections, were not deemed necessary to be known by Man. His Obligations and his Duties,
his

his Incitements to Obedience and to Love, were to be derived from no other Source than from the Knowledge of God, and of Himself.

But you perhaps will say, that if, as I suppose, the original Seduction was contrived and compassed by any Beings distinct from the Inhabitants of the Earth, some Knowledge of this Class of Beings at least should have been communicated to Mankind. How else could they understand the *Mosaic* Story of the Fall? or how conjecture, that the Serpent was informed, and actuated, by an invisible, intelligent, Spirit? The Truth is; Mankind were already sufficiently acquainted both with the Nature and Employment of those Beings. And one manifest, and incontestible Proof of this Fact is; that, though the Traditions

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concerning the one supreme, good, and perfect Deity, were very soon corrupted in the World, and his Worship lost, yet those relating to the Existence of Evil Spirits, as well as to their Power and Inclination to do Harm to Man, were always so clearly and constantly pursued and attended to, that they gave Rise to some of the most notorious Kinds of Idolatry in the earliest Times, and in subsequent Ages furnished Reasons in Defence of the same abominable and senseless Practice.

Thus, you see, the Silence of *Moses* upon this Point is easily accounted for: at least you will allow, that, after these Considerations, it never can have Weight enough to make us reject a Fact, of which the other Parts of Scripture afford the fullest, and most abundant

abundant, Confirmation. I do not indeed remember, that we are anywhere very expressly informed, what was the original Condition of the bad Angels, or what the Circumstances of their Crime. But thus much may be collected with Certainty from the sacred Writers : That they were Beings of a pure, and spiritual Nature ; but imperfect, because created : That they revolted from their Allegiance, and were thrust down from their Rank in the Creation : That their Degradation was attended by an immediate, and total, Alteration of their Nature ; their innate Dignity being changed into Pride, their Wisdom into Cunning, their Benevolence and Goodness into Envy, Discontent, and Malice : and lastly, that the Deity did not wholly restrain them from carrying into Execution the black and mischief-

vous Suggestions of their rebellious Minds ; but permitted them, no doubt for wise and just Purposes, to interrupt the Order of his new Creation, and trouble the Repose of Man.

Upon this Principle then let us proceed to consider the Circumstances of the Fall.

When the Heavens and the Earth were finished, then God created Man : to intimate to us, that the Heavens and the Earth were designed for Man's Uses, and Delight ; and that his Frame and Composition were more excellent and noble than the most splendid Parts of the material World.

This new-made Creature, formed after the Image and Resemblance of the Deity, endued with Reason,

Reason, Freedom, and Intelligence, and united, in some Sort, by those Faculties to the Power that gave them, seemed to possess, in a peculiar Manner, the Attention and Favour of his Creator.

A Portion of the Earth made choice of by God himself, and enriched with all the Shew of Beauty and Fertility, a Garden planted by the divine Hand, is assigned him for his Pleasure and Support : and Woman was created ; his Partner in Society, and Joint-parent of all the Families of the World.

Happiness, however, in a rational Being was to be the Result of Choice. It pleased God to impose a Precept, as a Mark of his own Sovereignty, and Test of Man's Obedience. A Precept, annexed
with

with great Propriety to an Object of the Senses, because these were the Incentives, as well as Instruments, of the Will. A Precept, of so gentle and easy Obligation, that the very Nature of the Prohibition seemed to assure to Man a Continuance of his happy State.

It doubtless might have continued to the End of Time ; if his plain and unsuspecting Reason had not fallen a Captive to the pressing Artifices of a Being accustomed to Disobedience. The Chief of those rebellious Spirits, whose Faculties were now all turned to Mischief, figured to himself some kind of Consolation, if he could by any Means deface this favourite Workmanship of Heaven, and make Man the Sharer and Companion both of his Crime and Misery.

That

That he might hold more easy Commerce with a Being whose Perceptions were derived from Sense, it was necessary to assume a sensible Form. And the Serpent, more sagacious than any Beast of the Field, is made choice of as the most proper Instrument for this Deceit.

But let us consider the Discourse and Conduct of the Tempter; and confess, that the Suggestions, by which our first Parents were deluded, came not from themselves. “Is it then true indeed, that in the Garden there is any Tree, of which God has forbidden you to eat?” Observe, that *Eve* could not be so ignorant of the divine Command, or so unacquainted with her own Condition, as to ask Herself this Question.

tion. “ But how absurd is this
 “ Prohibition? and how groundless
 “ are your Fears concerning it?”
 The Reasonableness of the Precept
 is first called in question; and
 Doubt prepares the Way to Disobe-
 dience. “ Permit me better to
 “ instruct you in the Qualities of
 “ this Fruit, with which I am
 “ well acquainted, though you,
 “ it seems, are a Stranger to them.
 “ Is this Fruit so fatal and so de-
 “ structive, that the Taste of it
 “ should be attended with certain
 “ Death? *Ye shall not surely die.*
 “ The Virtues of this Tree are of
 “ a pure, and intellectual, Nature.
 “ *Your Eyes shall be opened, to*
 “ *discern Good and Evil:* You
 “ shall rise above the Limits of
 “ your present confined, and
 “ short-sighted, Understanding;
 “ and your Knowledge shall com-
 “ prehend all Nature. *Ye shall*
 “ *be*

“ *be as Gods* : self-active, power-
 “ ful, and free ; unrestrained by
 “ any Precept ; and independent
 “ on any Master.” *Eve*, already
 more than half-persuaded, surveys
 the Fruit with all the Eagerness of
 Desire. Its Beauty seconded the
 Arts of the Deceiver ; and seemed
 to promise Excellencies unknown
 to other Kinds of Trees. She ga-
 thers it, and eats, and presents it
 to her Husband ; who, without
 the least Deliberation or Delay,
 consents to make the same fatal
 Trial of his Freedom.

The Punishment of their Of-
 fence was instant, and deplorable.
 The Eyes of Man indeed are
 opened ; but can only shew him
 his own Guilt, and Shame. He
 finds himself intirely changed ; and
 is sensible of the Depravation caus-
 D ed

ed by Sin. His Reason is become a Slave to Appetites, whose Power he had never before acknowledged. His Mind is weighed down with Remorse and Horror. The Presence of his Maker, which was once his Exultation and Delight, now fills him with Confusion. But in vain does he strive to hide himself from his Sight; in vain endeavour to extenuate his Offence. His very Excuses are a Confirmation of his Guilt: and Sentence of Death is denounced against him, as the divine Word had promised. The Earth too is cursed for his Sake: and its Productions rendered vile and ignoble, to suit with the Condition of fallen Man,

But how heavy soever this Punishment may appear, it was light when compared with that pronounced

nounced upon the Serpent. The Conduct of God with respect to the Deceiver, and the seduced Criminals, was very different: thereby denoting, not only that the Former had sustained a distinct and peculiar Part in this Transaction, but also such a Part, as was most offensive to the Deity, and most deserving of his severest Vengeance. Man therefore is admitted to speak in his own Defence, but the Serpent condemned without Examination. And while Man in the midst of Judgment is comforted with the Hopes of distant Mercy, his Enemy was forewarned of the certain, and irretrievable, Destruction that attended himself, and his malignant Empire, from the Seed of that very Woman over whom he had now basely triumphed.

Such is the Story of the Fall, as it presents itself upon the bare Perusal of the sacred Writings. The Circumstances, you see, are all strongly marked, and intimately connected. You may observe, how clearly the several Agents are distinguished ; how nicely their Characters ascertained ; and how suitable their Discourse and Action to their Characters. You know too, that the Antiquity and Genuineness of these Records, as well as the Capacity, Fidelity, and Authority of the Writer, are sufficiently established. Whence then is it now become so fashionable to reject a History, that carries with it all the Marks of Truth ? The Irregularity of the Passions, and the Miseries of Life, have long ago convinced Mankind, that their Nature must have suffered some great Change

Change since the first Creation. But of the Cause of this Change they still pretend to doubt. The Plainness and Simplicity of the *Mosaic* Story offends their Delicacy, and contradicts the Greatness of their Conceptions. They find it hard, it seems, to reconcile a Precept of so trivial a Nature with the Majesty of God. But the Source of this wrong Judgment is not difficult to be discovered. It is well known, how apt we are in all Things to form our Notions of Antiquity by Observations taken from the Times in which we live. Something similar to this obtains in the present Case. For, if these Men would but once shake off the Prejudices which they contract from Social Life, to which they are habituated from the

the Moment of their Birth ; if they would consider, that what They now perceive , feel , and experience , must, almost in all respects , be unlike the Objects of Perception, Feeling, and Experience , in our first Parents ; if they would, in short, reflect upon the naked and solitary , as well as the pure and unimpaired, Condition in which Man parted from the Hands of his Creator ; they might then be easily convinced, that the only possible Test of Obedience in such a Creature must have been something independent on the Moral Law ; something indifferent, and consequently trivial, in it's Nature ; something in itself neither good nor evil.

There are others, who amuse us with a Complaint of a different

ferent Kind. Some Passages, it seems, in this Relation are best interpreted in a literal, and others in a figurative, Sense. But, allowing the Fact, is there in reality any considerable Weight in this Objection? Whence arises the Necessity, that the Account must all be literal, or all figurative, or else all a Fiction? The History of the Creation is composed in the same mixed Style. But are these two manners of Expression any where so confounded, as to make it impossible, or even difficult, to separate one from the other? Has not each, on the contrary, some certain, and peculiar, Character, by which it may be distinguished? When *Moses* tells us, that *it had not yet rained upon the Earth*, who is there that does not understand this in the plain

plain and simple Import of the Words? But when he immediately subjoins, *And the Lord God formed Man of the Dust of the Ground, and breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life*, is any one so fordid as to imagine, that the Almighty applied his Fingers to the Clay, and then gave Life to the new-moulded Body in the Manner here described? Or is all we understand by it no more than this; that the Human Body was composed of the same Materials as the other Parts of the visible Creation; but animated by a Soul, whose Essence was intelligent and spiritual?

But what if the Thing here objected to should be no other than that very Method, which it has pleased God constantly and uniformly to em-

employ in all the long Course of his Communications with the World? This is indeed the Fact. The Custom of Scripture throughout is to address Mankind in this Mixture of literal and figurative Instruction. The Prophecies of the Old Testament are unintelligible, unless explained by this Method. And you may remember in what manner *Jesus Christ* has blended into one Description, the Desolation of *Jerusalem* and the Destruction of the *World*.

What I have said will, I hope, abundantly convince you of the Reality, as well as Strength, of that Foundation, upon which alone the Doctrine of a Redemption can be built. If there are yet left any Difficulties unexamined, they are such however as

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do not in the least affect the Substance of the Story. The same Tempter, the same Crime, the same Punishment, and the same Hopes of Mercy, will unvariably remain : to the eternal Confusion of those restless and contentious Men, who sacrifice the Truth to their Ambition of a Name ; and who, with all their boasted Abilities and Acquirements, are still unlearned in that temperate and sober Wisdom, which is the chief Ornament of Christianity.

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